

Getting ahead of THE GAME

The future is looking bright for New Zealand's up and coming sports turf specialists as more hands-on learning opportunities open up for them in 2011.



Otago Polytechnic, which runs New Zealand's only full-time turf management course out of its Cromwell campus, is restructuring its programme to provide a new flexible delivery internship component from February 2011.

Otago Polytechnic's 2 year sports turf programme has been running for 10 years and covers the management of golf courses, rugby and cricket venues. It currently has a 40 – 60 mix of theory and practical learning, with work experience at top facilities and paid seasonal work. Under the new structure, Year One students will be eligible to apply for internship positions starting in September. Successful students will complete the rest of their studies while placed at sporting venues, by distance delivery and classes at the polytechnic during the off-season.

According to Gary Smith, Otago Polytechnic's Sports Turf Management Programme Manager (pictured top right), the decision to introduce the internship is two-fold.

"We're responding to feedback from the industry which, via our Advisory Group, has told us they value our students and need them out in the field quicker, particularly from September onwards when they're flat out."

"The internships give employers the chance to 'try before they buy' by evaluating students for future staff employment opportunities as well as investing in the sports turf industry."

"The other advantage is that our new internship component will enable greater flexibility to cater to student needs. Placements will be organised throughout New Zealand which means that students who come from the North Island will be able to go home to earn and learn for some of the time. We realise it's a big financial and personal commitment to be away for two years so we've been looking for ways to provide flexible study options that fit with home, work and lifestyle choices."

"The students will still be studying while they're on their internships, but the focus will be on getting hands-on experience with industry professionals. Then they'll come back for another block of theory and practical assessments with us before graduating and heading out into the workforce."

Another update to the programme structure means students can leave after the first year of the course with the National Certificate in Amenity Turf Management (Level 3). However, those who complete the two years graduate with a National Certificate in Sports Turf Management (Level 4).

Gary says the 'learn by doing' approach of the programme is part of the Polytechnic's philosophy of 'hands on learning'.

"My personal philosophy is 'real people with real skills get real jobs'. We want students to gain real life knowledge from those in the industry, and getting the opportunity to work alongside some of the country's top groundskeepers is a great way to learn."

"Several of our students have been selected to help prepare the grounds for high profile events such as international cricket matches and assisting with the Michael Hill NZ Golf Open."

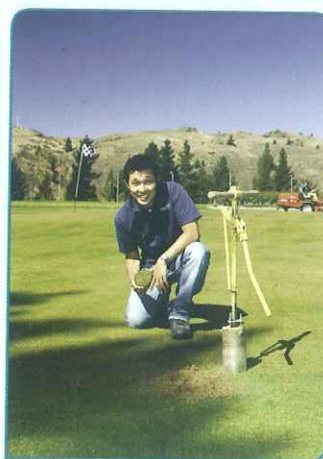
"The experience they gain will be incredibly valuable and in the long run I hope New Zealand will be known for producing some of the top turf management specialists in the world."

Students will also be available to help with preparations for the Rugby World Cup in 2011.

Otago Polytechnic's approach is gaining international recognition as students win internships abroad and international students sign up for Sports Turf Management. Mark Brooks, a recent Turf Management graduate, landed himself a sought-after 18-month USA State Ohio Golf Internship at the prestigious Quail Hollow Golf Club in Ohio USA.

"It's a pretty unreal place to work, I'd recommend it to anyone," said Mark Brooks. "Once I applied it took only two weeks from the time I received the call from the college to landing in the States."

Japan's Yuki Waga (pictured below) was the first international student to enrol for the Polytechnic course and says he was attracted by its unique opportunities.



"I wanted experience working in an international stadium and Gary has organised a special placement for me at Westpac Stadium in Hamilton. I'm so excited - I'll be getting involved with Provincial and Super 14 games, test matches and the build-up to the Rugby World Cup games in 2011," says Waga.

"Nowhere else could I find such hands-on experience."

"I really want to work on the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan and the skills I'll learn here will hopefully help me to achieve that."

Former students are now working in America, Europe, Ireland and Australia. Others closer to home include Dunedin's University Oval Head Groundsman Tom Tamati who graduated in 2002, 2006 graduate Bede O'Connell who's now second-in-charge groundskeeper at Hamilton's Seddon Park international cricket ground, and 2008 graduate Dane McRae who's Queenstown Events Centre's second-in-charge groundskeeper.

Below: 2007 graduate Mark Brooks mows around Greg Turner at the Queenstown Golf Club.



For more information about the new intern programme please contact Otago Polytechnic Cromwell on 0800 765 9276 or visit www.otagopolytechnic.ac.nz

Love Sport?

Want a career working close to top sportspeople?

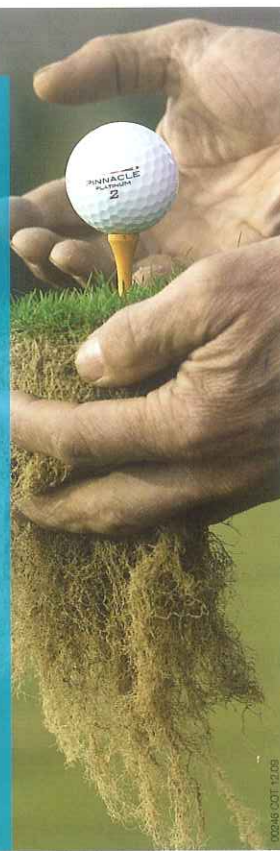
National Certificate in Sports Turf Management (Level 4)

This programme is the only full-time sports turf programme in New Zealand – and is endorsed by New Zealand Cricket and New Zealand Golf.

You will develop turf knowledge and skills required for positions of responsibility in the industry, while enjoying two years studying in sunny Central Otago – the adventure capital of New Zealand!!

This programme covers the management of golf courses, rugby grounds, cricket venues, and other sporting venues, with a 50-50 mix of theory and practical work, work experience every week at top sports facilities and internships throughout New Zealand. Our graduates are highly valued and are in great demand worldwide.

Enrol Now!!



0800 765 9276
www.otagopolytechnic.ac.nz

Prebble Seeds Higher Learning Awards

Prebble Seeds and the NZ Sports Turf ITO take great pleasure in confirming the following recipients of the 2009 Prebble Seeds Higher Learning Awards. Each 2009 recipient has been presented with a \$500 scholarship by Bruce Lowe – Sales Manager, Prebble Seeds New Zealand.

Sean Kells: Superintendent Kapiti Golf Club

At just 30 years of age, Sean initially served his apprenticeship at Paraparamu Golf Club and has subsequently built a 14+ year career primarily in the NZ Turf Management industry, as well as a stint at Sunningdale Golf Course in the United Kingdom.

Sean was one of the first apprentices to complete the National Certificate in Sports Turf Management, Level 4 and is now looking forward to resuming his studies towards achieving the National Diploma in Sports Turf Management, Level 6.



Sean says; "I would like to thank Prebble Seeds for their contribution and look forward to getting back into study after almost nine years! Now that I am a Superintendent, doing the Diploma will assist me to effectively put in place ideas and implement changes with a better understanding."

Brayden Rawlinson: Turf Management Specialist Wellington City Council

This is the second consecutive year that Brayden has received a Prebble Seeds Scholarship Award. At 22 years of age and with four years experience in the Turf Management industry, Brayden appears to be on the fast-track to success!

When asked what his career aspirations are, Brayden says; "To work at Lords Cricket Club or at the Ashes series." Brayden also adds; "Thanks to Prebble Seeds for the opportunity to further my studies and career. I am doing the Level 6 Diploma to further my career and gain knowledge in order to stand out from others."

Both Prebble Seeds and the NZ Sports Turf Industry Training Organisation (NZSTITO) wish Brayden and Sean well with achieving their goals and aspirations in 2010 and beyond.

Kevin Timms, Training Operations Manager, NZSTITO

